

Seattle City Council

**Public Safety, Government Relations, and Arts Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, 2:00 PM, August 1, 2006

**Words' Worth**

The Poetry Program of the Seattle City Council

Curated by **Jeannette Allée**

Today's poet is **Jared Angira**

**Jared Angira** is a graduate of the University of Nairobi, Kenya and the London School of Economics. He has published seven volumes of poetry including *Cascades*, *Tides of Time* and *Lament of the Silent and Other Poems*. One of his books was featured in the Heinemann Publishers' African Series and his poetry has been widely published in literary magazines in both English and Swahili. He is the former CEO of Menta Consultants, has worked for the Kenya Ports Authority, the Agricultural Finance Corporation, and is past chairman of the Kenya Organization of Writers Association.

**Soft Poesy**

by Jared Angira

I'll not ask for anything more  
    Not a high price for the time  
Not a favour in your manger  
    Not a gift for a special day.  
I'll not ask for anything great  
    Which the journalists will pursue  
And the banners display  
    Nothing that the strong shall demand  
And the bugles announce  
    Not even that which can be auctioned  
To the highest bidder.  
    I'll only ask for that which  
Cannot be given at gunpoint  
    Nor at the highest bid  
Not even Herod's promise  
    For the millstone wheel revolves  
Dancing the tango  
    Wishing to transform it all  
While the matadors fight it out

In the bull ring  
Yet all I ask for  
Does not go at the Stock Exchange.

### **Letters**

by Jared Angira

You have written me  
Six letters  
I saw in them knots  
To be untied  
First, was merely  
“yours”....  
I liked that  
Though I never owned you  
In any case  
We’d danced the tango  
Not that  
We possessed each other  
Then you wrote,  
“yours very truly”  
But how true were you  
When in the night  
You trailed in my farm  
And uprooted the seedling?  
I saw less hypocrisy  
In your third letter  
When you said  
“your beloved”  
You were not the first  
To misuse words  
And I knew you belied  
All the flash from the hills  
But when you signed  
“yours faithfully”  
I got concerned

For when we danced  
The Cuban marimba  
entwining each other  
There was no gesture  
of faith  
Indeed I say you raise  
your arm  
To cast that vote

of no confidence  
against me.  
And you keep varying  
your tactics  
May be  
It's business  
"yours sincerely"  
When you sincerely knew  
we had no dialogue  
Nor sincerity.  
And when  
in your final letter  
You ended  
"yours affectionately"  
I knew  
the anachrony  
For it is you  
who was to effect  
my crucifixion.

-- end --